

A
Seventh LETTER,
Concerning the
Sacred Trinity;
Occasioned by a
Second Letter
From W. J.

By JOHN WALLIS, D. D.
Professor of Geometry, in Oxford.

L O N D O N:
Printed for Tho. Parkhurst, at the Bible and Three
Crowns, in Cheapside, 1691.

Seventh LETTER
Concerning the
Sacred Trinity;

Second Letter

From W. A.

JOHN WILKINSON

Prebendary of Exeter, in Oxford

LONDON

Printed for Wm. Baskin, at the Bible and Truce
Stands, in Cheap-side, 1701.

A Seventh LETTER

Concerning the

Sacred Trinity.

IN a Postscript to my Sixth Letter (which should have been Printed with it; but came, it seems, too late, after all the Sheets were Printed off,) I gave notice, That I had received from *London* the Night before (*March 27.*) another Letter from *W. J.* of a like import with his former; but somewhat fuller.

That, what in it did directly concern me, was but Expressions of Thanks, Respect, and Approbation. For which I knew not how otherwise (than by such a way) to return him my acknowledgment: Because he did neither signify who he is that writes; nor do I know any in *London*, to who's Name the Letters *W. J.* do belong.

That, there were Reflections in it, on some Expressions of a Learned Author: which Expressions I do not see that I am at all engaged to defend: And did therefore wave them.

That, to say, *The three Divine Persons, are Three Intelligent*

telligent Beings (three substantial Beings, three Spirits,) Really Distinct, (though mutually conscious,) is more, he thinks, than that Learned Author needed to have said; (And I think so too :) And that it is more Safe, to be less Positive and Particular, as to what the Scripture leaves in the dark. And his Answer (I think) would not have been less valid, (against those he undertakes to answer,) though such Expressions were omitted.

That, I did forbear to publish that Letter without his Order; because I was loth to engage the Learned Writer thereof in a *Publick Dispute* against that Learned Author, unless he please.

Since which time; considering, that the Postscript came too late to be Printed with that Letter of mine; and, that the Letter of this Reverend Divine (for such I take him to be by the contents of it,) seems to be penned with that care and caution, as if he were willing to have it publick; and without any intimation of Dislike for my having published his former Letter in like Circumstances: I have thought not amiss (nor unagreeable to his mind) to publish this also. Which is as followeth: (supplying the Date from the Post-mark at London, denoting what day it was given in to the Post-Office there.)

For

That, to say, The three Divine Persons, are three intelligent Beings, is more, he thinks, than that Learned Author needed to have said; (And I think so too :) And that it is more Safe, to be less Positive and Particular, as to what the Scripture leaves in the dark. And his Answer (I think) would not have been less valid, (against those he undertakes to answer,) though such Expressions were omitted.

For the Reverend Dr. Wallis, Professor
of Geometry, at Oxford.

London, March 24. 1698.

SIR,

Your Repeated Letters, give me a just occasion of Repeating my hearty Thanks to you. And I hope you will give me leave to join both my good Wishes and Endeavours to promote that Moderation which you seem to Aim at, in stating the Mysterious Truths concerning the Trinity. Methinks we might be easily perswaded to this; by the Difficulties which all men find in conceiving those Mysteries: Especially the Consequences which some make from them; and impose upon us as Certain and Sacred Truths.

Sir, Because I would have you lose as little of your Time as may be in reading my Letters; I will enter immediately upon the Subject proposed; and consider, not some lesser Niceties, but the Two Main Points in the Doctrine of the Trinity; and the Difficulties which our Understandings represent to us in the Conception of them.

The Two Main Points are these: The Unity of the Godhead, notwithstanding the Distinction of Three Persons: And the Equality of those Three Persons, notwithstanding their Derivation one from another.

Concerning the Divine Persons; The Hypothesis which we referred to formerly (and shall still follow) asserts these Three Things. First, That they are Three Beings (or Three Intelligent Beings) Really Distinct. Secondly, That they are Three Subsisting Beings, Really Distinct. Thirdly, That

That they are Three Infinite Minds, or Three Holy Spirits, Really Distinct. And, to these, I think, we may of course add a Fourth Character, That they are Three Complete Beings, really Distinct.

They are not Inadequate or Partial Beings. For a Spirit infinite in Perfection, as each of these is represented, can want nothing to complete its Being or Perfection.

Let us now, if you please, run over these Characters; and observe the most obvious Difficulties, that occur to our Minds in the Conception of them.

For the first, Three Beings really distinct. According to the plain *Tract* of humane Reason, Every real Being hath its Essence; (that is the Basis it stands upon, as distinguished from Non-Entity, or a Fictitious Being). And every Distinct Being hath its Distinct Essence: I mean, Numerically distinct. And therefore, according to this Principle, there ought to be Three distinct Essences in the Godhead, seeing there are Three Beings, there, really distinct.

Furthermore; If you give one single Essence to Three Beings really distinct, you must either Divide it, or Multiply it. Either each of these Beings must have a Piece of this Essence; and then you Divide it: or each must have the Whole; and then, being but one Whole, you cannot give it to Three without Multiplying of it.

This is still made more difficult to conceive, when the Author allows these Three to be as Distinct as Peter, James, and John. For if they be as Distinct as Peter, James and John; they are One but as Peter, James and John. For every degree of Distinction takes away a degree of Unity: As every degree of Heat, takes away a degree of Cold.

We proceed to the second Character. The Three Divine Persons, are Three Substantial Beings, Really distinct. That is, in plain English, are Three Substances Really distinct. As a Spiritual Being is a Spirit; a Corporeal Being, a Body: so a Substantial Being is a Substance; *putting*

ting only Two Words for One.) And the Author must understand it so; because he makes them Three Spirits afterwards: and therefore they must be Three Substances.

Besides, what are they, pray, if not Substances? they cannot be Modes, or bare Relations. I know some Platonists call them Super-Substances. Or, if you will think them lower, and call them Semi-Substances, (as some Philosophers do their Substantial Forms :) All this is but playing with Words. For there is nothing represented to our Faculties, but as Substances, Modes, or Relations; excepting what is merely Notional.

And the Learned Author must not debar us the use of the Word Substance, under pretence that it sounds Corporeally. For two Creeds make use of it: and the Scripture it self, upon a fair interpretation, Heb. 1. 3.

To proceed therefore. Here are Three Substances Really Distinct, whereof each is a God (pag. 47. l. 13. p. 98. l. 23.) and yet there is but One God. This is very hard to conceive, as contrary to all our Ideas of Number and Numeration.

'Tis true, we may conceive these Three Substances, in strict Union one with another, notwithstanding their real Distinction. But Union is one thing, and Unity is another. For Unity excludes all Plurality and Multiplicity; which Union doth not, but rather supposes it. Unity also, in simple Natures, excludes all Compositions: which Union, on the contrary, always implies, in one kind or other.

Accordingly; Substances, upon Union, are not Confounded or Identified, or brought to Unity of Substance: But, continuing numerically distinct Substances, acquire some Communions or Communication of Operations: namely, of such Actions and Passions as they are respectively capable of.

Let us consider Instances of these things, in the chief union that are known to us. Our Soul and Body are two Substances really distinct, and in close Union with one another:

But,

But, notwithstanding this, they continue distinct Substances under that Union. In like manner, the Human Soul of Christ is in Union with the Logos, or second Person of the Trinity, notwithstanding that Hypostatical Union. But neither doth this Union make any Unity of Substances; for the two Substances of the Divine and Human Natures, continue distinct under that Union. Which must not be allowed in the Unity of the Godhead, where there can be no Plurality or Multiplicity of Substances.

The Learned Author does acknowledge (p. 87, 87) that these three Substances, if they were separate, would be three Gods. But being Inseparable and Inseparable, they make but One. This is again uneasy to conceive, that Substances Really distinct should not be separable. For the notion of a Substance, is, of that which may subsist by itself. And what mark have we of separability but Real Distinction? Things that are only Modally or Notionally distinct, we allow cannot subsist separate: But if they be Really distinct, as Substances, why may they not be separated Really? When we have proved, the Real Distinction of the Soul and the Body, as two Substances; we think we have sufficient ground to assert the Separability of the Soul from the Body. And from the same Reason, we assert the Parts of Matter to be Separable, as being Really distinct Substances, let their Union be otherwise what it will. For, if our Faculties be true, what things we clearly conceive Really distinct (ut res & res) may (possibly) be separated. Clear and distinct Conception being to us the rule of Partibility.

But however! Suppose, if you please, this Union Indissoluble; this does not change it into Unity. If the Soul of Man was made to be in Perpetual Conjunction with Matter, as some Platonists affirm: that doth not make Matter and the Soul, One and the same substance; nor Matter cease to be Matter, or the Soul a Spirit. So, if you suppose these three Divine Substances to be under an Indissoluble Union; that doth not make

make them cease to be three Substances: but, it makes them, Three Substances in an Indissoluble Union.

What the learned Author says concerning Matter and Extension, may be returned upon him in reference to the Godhead. (p. 80. l. 9, 10.) He supposes Extension to consist of Parts, if they be only Assignable parts, whether they can be divided or not: so, say we, (according to this opinion) The Godhead may consist of several Substances, if they be only Assignable Substances, whether they can be Divided or not: And you may as Distinctly Assign, by your Understanding, Three Substances in the Godhead, that of the Father, that of the Son, and that of the Holy Ghost; as you may Assign Three Parts in a Physical Atome, by A. B. C.

Lastly, There is no Substance lost or destroyed in this or any other Union, Dissoluble or Indissoluble: Therefore, as to Substances, they are the same, whether in Conjunction or Separation.

We come unto the Third Character. (pag. 50. 166. 258. see also p. 93.) The Three Divine Persons are Three Infinite Minds, or Three Holy Spirits: And yet but One God. This rises still higher than the former as to its Unconceivableness. It seems to say and unsay the same thing, with the same breath. An Infinite Spirit is compleatly a God, as to Essence and Attributes: Therefore three such are three Gods. Omnis mens infinite perfecta est Deus; Tres sunt mentes infinite perfectæ; Ergo Tres sunt Dii. Where is the fourth of this Syllogism?

This Character seems to assert Three Infinities: Whereas the Athanasian Creed, which stands at the highest pitch of any, is yet very tender and cautious in giving the number Three to any thing but the Persons. It will not allow three Eternals, nor three Incomprehensibles, nor three Almightyies: But, three Infinities include all these.

An Infinite Spirit (as I said before) is a God, (I mean, Infinite in Perfection, as our Author doth,) And three Spi-

rity, whereof each is Infinite in Perfection, are Three Gods : As, three Creatures, whereof each is a Rational Animal, are three Men. Both these Propositions go upon the same ground, namely, That the Definition, and the thing Defined, are reciprocal and of the same extent. Now we have no better Definition of a Man, than that he is a Rational Animal; so neither have we a better Definition of a God, than that he is a Spirit infinitely Perfect. And as so many Animals Rational, so many Men; so likewise, so many Spirits infinitely perfect, so many Gods.

I speak this according to the use of our Faculties. For, what the true and precise state of things is, in themselves, when the question is concerning Infinite Natures, I do not presume to determine.

But thus much, I think, we may safely determine, That in such cases where our Faculties are at a loss, the safest way is to keep close to Revelation and the words of Scripture. And that's the Conclusion I drive at.

Lastly, To put a plain question, which will come into every one's mind : Here are Three Spirits infinitely Perfect; either they are Gods, or they are Creatures? They must be one of the Two. When we speak of a Spirit infinitely perfect, we describe an absolute, compleat, entire Being. Which must be of some Denomination, either a God, or a Creature; for we know nothing of a middle nature betwixt these.

Possibly they will Answer this by a Distinction; namely, that they are three Gods considered Separately; but considered collectively and in Union, they are but One God: And seeing they cannot be really separate, it would be improper to call them Three Gods. But, pray, Why not as properly three Gods, as three Infinite Spirits? seeing these terms, A Spirit infinitely perfect, and A God, are terms equivalent or identical. What partiality is it then to allow the one, and not the other? And if these Infinite Spirits be Inseparable, why do you grant the number Three to that name, and not to the name of Gods?

Seeing

seeing they are both the same Thing, and equally Inseparable.

We observed before, that this Learned Author is liberal in his Threes; three Intelligent Beings, three Infinite Minds, three Holy Spirits, three Divine Glories, three Majesties; but not three Kings. 'Tis the Name, it seems, is scrupled, rather than the Thing.

Sir, I will add no more upon these Heads. But will consider now the grand Principle which is designed to take off all these Difficulties; And that is, mutual Consciouſness; whereby all these Threes are made One; and reduced to a perfect Numerical Unity,

I need not spend time in telling you what the Author means by mutual Consciouſness, nor how he applies it to the present case: You know them both sufficiently. But murther this Unitive Principle is defectively expressed, by the word Consciouſness. For bare Consciouſness, without Consent, is no more than bare Omniscieny. As God is Conscious of all our Thoughts, good or bad; and of all the Devils thoughts; without Union, as without Consent. If a good and bad Angel were made mutually Conscious of one anothers mind, they would not thereupon become One, being still of different Wills and Inclinations.

It may be the Author will say, Consciouſness involves Consent, as he says, Knowledge involves Power, or is the same with it. But, besides, that I cannot well reconcile the Author to himself in this point, (See p. 9. l. 3, 4. compared with p. 72.) I have given you Instances in a former Letter to the contrary. To which you may add, if you please, this further consideration: If Knowledge be the same thing with Power, then actual Conception is the same thing with actual Execution. And if so, then You and I may sit quietly in our studies, and, with our Thought and Pen, build Palaces, and take Towns and Cities. For we know the Methods of both, and can distinctly conceive them and delineate them. And as these

are not the same thing in us, so neither can we conceive them, in all respects, the same in God. For, from all Eternity, God had a clear Idea of the frame of the World, and of the manner of producing it: therefore, if God's Conception or Knowledge had been the same with his Power, the World had been produced from Eternity.

But to proceed, Let us give this Principle its full strength, Consciousness and Consent: they would not together make a perfect Unity of Operations in the Deity much less of Substance. We noted before, that Unity and Union are different things. And this is more apparent now, when Three Spirits are to be united into One. For how that can be done without some sort of Composition, is an unconceivable Mystery. You may indeed conceive these Three Spirits, singly and separately, as simple Beings: But if you conceive these three simple Beings united into One (without Annihilation of any one) that One must be a Compound Being, according to our Conceptions.

Then, as to Unity of Operations: Besides the Energies peculiar to the Father and the Son, this Author allows (p. 67.) that every one of these three Minds, notwithstanding their Union, hath some Distinct Consciousness, not common to the other Two: therefore the Godhead, which consists of these Three Minds, cannot be One as a single Mind is One; where there is an intire Community and Sameness of Consciousness in all Operations.

In my opinion, if this Hypothesis were prest to speak out, the plain language of it would be this; There are Three Divine Substances, three Holy Spirits, infinitely Perfect, and, in truth and reality, three Gods: But, for some Reasons, not fit to be called so. These three Beings, by Similitude of Nature, mutual Consciousness, Consent, Cooperation, are under the greatest Union possible; and, in that state of Union, do constitute the *no Sicut*, the Intire All, comprehensive Godhead. This, I confess, looks something like a conceivable thing:

thing: But the Christian Trinity does not use to be represented thus. For this amounts to no more than a kind of Hypostatical Union of Three Divine Spirits.

Sir, I will trouble you no further upon the first general Head, The Distinction of the Persons. I proceed now to consider the Equality of the Persons. Which I will dispatch in a few Words.

The first Argument against their Equality may be this (pag. 99. l. 29. &c.) The Father is *αὐτογενής*, self-existent, self-originated: whereas the other Two are *ἑτερογενέσι*, existent and originated from another. Now this cannot but make, according to our Faculties, not only some Difference, but also some Inequality. For 'tis a fundamental Perfection to be self-originated: and what is not so, is not Equal to that which is so.

You will say possibly, Though the Son and Holy-Ghost are produced of the Father, yet 'tis not in such a way as Creatures are produced. That is, by a voluntary External Act; but This, by an Internal, Necessary, and Emanative Act.

We will allow your Distinction; and admit that the Son and Holy-Ghost have a different Origin from that of common Creatures. But this does not remove the Difficulty. It shews indeed a great Difference and Inequality betwixt any of the Divine Persons, and bare Creatures: But it does not shew any Equality amongst the Divine Persons themselves. 'Tis true, the Dependance which a Creature hath upon the Creator for its Being, is of another kind and degree from that of the Son or Holy-Ghost. But however, they are Derivative Beings, in some way or other, and dependent upon the Father. And we cannot but conceive some Inequality betwixt an Original and a Derivative, a Dependent and Independent Being.

Secondly, That Act whereby the Son is Generated by the Father, is some Energy and Perfection: Nay, 'tis an Energy of the Highest Perfection; Because the Result of it is the most Perfect Being that can any way be produced; or the Noblest and Greatest

Greatest Product in Things, Creation, or that Energy that produceth a Creature, hath not a Term or Effect so Noble or so Great, as that Energy whereby the Son is generated: And consequently it is not so great a Perfection to Create a World, as to Generate the Divine Logos. This being so; there is, you see, not only Self-Origination in the Father, which is not in the Son: but also an Active Perfection of the highest Degree possible, in the One, which is not in the other. And therefore we cannot in either respect, conceive these two Beings equal.

Besides, if you make them all three Equal, and all Infinite; they will be Co-ordinate, (I mean internally, & as to perfection of Nature: For, External Subordination, as to Oeconomy, signifies nothing in this case.) And are no more One, than three Individuals of the same Species are One; that is, than Peter, James and John are or may be One. And this, I think, was the Doctrine of the Tritheites, or very near it.

Lastly, You may please to reflect upon the various Sentiments and Expressions of the Ancients, concerning the Dignity and Preheminence of the Fathers; (which you know are noted by Petavius (de Trin. lib. 2. c. 2. & l. 8. c. 9. p. 15.) and consider their Consistency or Inconsistency with perfect Equality.

Sir, As I do not write this with any Disrespect to that Treatise, (which contains many Excellent things;) so neither to represent absolute Truth or Untruth: But the Difficulty of our conceiving things of an Infinite Nature. From which Consideration I would willingly infer Two Conclusions.

First, That we ought to keep close to Scripture in these Mysterious Doctrines.

Secondly, That we should not impose Consequences humanely made, with the same Rigour as divinely revealed Truths.

The Anti-trinitarian System is not at all suited to my Genius. Yet I would not stretch the Trinitarian Doctrine so far,

far, as to set it at a Distance from Scripture as well as from Reason. Secret things belong unto the Lord : but those things that are Revealed, belong to us and our Children. Deut. 29. 29. And the Angels, it may be, think us as foolish and ridiculous, for pursuing these Notions, as we think ourselves wise and learned in such pursuits.

I am, Sir, with all Sincerity,

Your most humble Servant,

W. J.

To this Letter, I reply as followeth.

To the Reverend W. J.

SIR,

I Am obliged to you for the Kind and Respectful Character, which you are pleased to afford me in Both your Letters. I am not at all displeased (but thank you for it) with a like Moderation in Yours (to what you commend in my Letters) as to the *Mysterious* Truths concerning the Sacred Trinity : And do fully close with what you say in the Conclusion, *That the Angels may think us as Foolish and Ridiculous, for pursuing these Notions further than they are Revealed, as we think ourselves Wise and Learned in such pursuits* : Like as You or I should Laugh at a Blind man (who had never seen) that should undertake to Conceive in his Mind, and Express to us in word,) a Distinct and Perfect Notion or Idea of Sight, Light, and Colours.

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He may Hear the Noise or Sound of those three Words (supposing him, though Blind, not to be Deaf, also,) and may Believe that they signifie *Somewhat*. But, what that *Somewhat* is, he cannot Tell; having never had an Idea thereof in his Mind, nor a Perception thereof by his Senses.

And if You or I (from that Notion which our selves have of it) would Explain it to him: We could do it no otherwise than by the Use of such Words (in a sense Analogical) as do properly belong to somewhat of which he hath (from Experience) some Idea.

Sight, we might say, is a certain kind of *Sense* or *Feeling* in our *Eyes* (which we have not in our Hand, Feet, or other parts of our Body,) whereby we can (as it were) Feel with our Eyes, the *Shape*, *Figure*, *Bigness* and *Proportion* of a *Body* at a *Distance*; as we might, with our *Hands* if within our Reach. Whereby he might Apprehend, that there is some kind of Resemblance between Seeing and Feeling; but, what indeed it is to *See*, he cannot comprehend.

Light, we might tell him, is a Necessary *Requisite* to such a *Feeling* with our *Eyes*, as that for want of it (which Want we call *Darkness*) we can no more *so Feel*, or *Discover*, by our *Eyes*, such *Shape*, *Figure*, or *Bigness*; than we could, with our *Hands*, that (suppose) of a Piece of Money locked up in a Box which we could not open; but, by the Admission of such *Requisite*, we are inabled *so to Feel* it with our *Eyes*, as we might with our *Hands*, if the Box were opened whereby we might come to Handle it.

Colour, we might tell him, is somewhat of such a Nature, as that, on a Plain Board (or the like) on which by our Hand we can Feel nothing but Smooth and Uniform; by it may be Represented (to be *so Felt* with our Eyes) as great variety of Shapes and Figures, (suppose, of a Horse,

Horse, a Bird, a Ship, a House, or any Shape whatever) as by our Hand we might, if we had such Shapes formed in Wood or Stone; and the different Motions of such.

But, after all this, it is not possible for this Blind man to have that *Idea* or *Notion* in his Fancy, of *Sight, Light, and Colour*, which we have who *See*.

And it is much more Impossible for Us (who have no Notions in our Mind, other than what we derive, Mediate or Immediately, from Sensible Impressions of Finite Corporeal Beings) to have a Clear and Perfect Notion, of the Nature, Unity, Distinctions or Attributes of an Infinite Spiritual Being; or otherwise to express them than by some Imperfect Analogies or Resemblances with things we are conversant with; and by words in a borrowed sense from such.

I do therefore fully agree with you in your *Two Conclusions*; namely, That it is Safe and Prudent to keep close to *Scripture in these Mystrious Doctrines*; (since we know nothing of them otherwise than as there Revealed;) And, not to impose Consequences of Humane Deduction, with the like Rigour as Divinely-revealed Truths. For, even in common affairs, when things are represented onely by the Analogy or Resemblance which they bear to some other things; it is seldom that the Similitude is so Absolute between them, but that there is some Dissimilitude likewise. Much more when the Distance is so great as between Finite Corporeal Beings, and what is Infinite and Incorporeal. So that we cannot always argue cogently from one to the other.

And therefore the words *Nature, Essence, Unity, Distinction, Father, Son, Person, Beget, Proceed*, (and the like,) when applied to God in a borrowed sense from what they properly signify as applied to *Creatures*, must not be supposed to signify just the same, but somewhat Analogous to that of their Primary signification; nor

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Consequences thence to be deduced with the same Rigour.

It would be mere Cavilling for any to argue, that, Because Knowledge and Strength are separable in Man; Therefore, what in God we call by those names, are so in God; and that, consequently, it may be Possible for the All-wise God, not to be Almighty; or the Almighty God, not to be All-wise. So, if we should argue from the manner of our *Locality* or *Duration*, to God's *Ubiquity without Extension*, and his *Eternity without Succession*; the Inferences must needs be lame and Inconsequent. With other Inferences of like nature.

And, (even without proceeding to Infinites) if we suppose a Spirit, or the Soul of Man, to be void of Parts and Local Extension, and therefore (as the Phrase is) *tota in toto & tota in qualibet parte* of that Space or Matter to which it is compresent: And should yet argue (as you do in a like case) If one single Spirit be compresent with three or more really-distinct Parts of Space or Matter; we must Divide or Multiply it: Either each of these extensive Parts must have a Piece of that Spirit; and then you Divide it: Or, each must have the Whole, and (there being but one Whole) you cannot give it to each, without Multiplying it: Such Inference upon such a Supposition (which Supposition I am loth to think Impossible,) must needs be lame.

Yet such are commonly the Cavils of those who study to pick Quarrels with the Doctrine of the Trinity as delivered in Scripture. And (in particular) though, amongst Men, Three Persons are sometimes (not always) so used as to import three Men; we may not thence conclude, that the three Divine Persons, must needs imply three Gods. Or, if the word Persons do not please, (though I think it a fit word in the case; we can spare the word, without prejudice to the Cause, (for 'tis the Notion, rather

ther than the *Name*, that we contend for,) and content our selves to say, They be *three Somewhats*, which are but *One God*. Or, we may so explain our selves, That, by *three Persons* we mean *three such Somewhats* as are not inconsistent with being *One God*.

And hitherto, I suppose, that You and I do well enough agree.

Now, as to what you observe concerning the Learned Author (Dr. Sherlock;) I shall begin where you end: And agree with you, that the *Treatise* (to which you refer) contains many Excellent things. The Strength and Weight of his Arguments, as to those to whom he undertakes Answer, doth not depend upon those Expressions against which you object: But his Arguments against those, are of equal Force, though these Expressions were spared.

As to those Expressions of his, by you noted, That the *three Divine Persons* are *Three Beings* (*three Intelligent Beings, three Substantial Beings, three Holy Spirits,*) Really *Distinct*, even as distinct as *Peter, James, and John*; and *One God* onely as they are *mutually* *Conscious*: I was (I confess) Unsatisfied therein (as You are) from the first; Looking upon them as Expressions too Hardy for one to venture upon, (and so I find are most others with whom I have discoursed about them:) and wish he had declined them.

Yet I did not think it necessary for me to write against them (though I did not like them) but chose rather to wave them, and express my self otherwise. (For it would be Endless if I should make it my business to write Books against every one who hath some Expressions which I cannot approve, amongst many others wherein I think he doth well.) Nor shall I Aggravate the Objections which you have Urged against them; But leave them as they are.

I might perhaps mollifie some of his Expressions, by putting a softer sense upon them than at first view they seem to bear ; (for I find some Men, in such matters, do use words at a very different rate from what others do :) But I have not, (where now I am) the Book at hand ; and have read it but once (a good while since) when it first came out : and therefore am not willing to say much without Book, least I should miss his sense, or not perform it to his mind.

That learned Author may, if he think fit, so Vindicate or Explain those Expressions as he shall judge convenient : Or he may (which I had rather he should) Decline them, without prejudice to his main Cause ; (which, in my opinion, he may as well defend without them :) and thereby less expose himself to the Cavils of the Anti trinitarians ; who are catching at every colourable pretence of Objecting, though not against the main Cause concerning the Trinity, if but against some Expressions of those who maintain it.

Thus far, I think, He and both of Us do agree ; namely, That there is a *Distinction* between the *Three*, more than merely *Notional*, and even more than that, between (what we commonly call) the *Divine Attributes* ; yet not so as to be *Three Gods*, or more Gods than *One* : (which is as much as we need maintain against the Anti-Trinitarians :) And, that the word *Person* is no unfit Name to denote that Distinction. And thus far we may close with him, notwithstanding some other Inconvenient Expressions.

And if it be agreed that these *Three* (thus distinguished) are but *One God* (each Communicating in one and the same Numerical Essence,) then they are all *Equal* (as to that common *Internal Essence*, and the common *Attributes* thereof :) and then an *External Subordination*, as to *Oeconomy* (you grant) signifies nothing in this case.

Now,

Now, Sir, if you look back upon your own Discourse: You will find, that the whole Edge of your Arguments is directed against those Expressions, *Three Beings, Three Substances, Three Spirits*; (and I do acknowledge, that, as to these, the Arguments seem to me sharp enough, and to do their work.) But if, instead of these, he say (as I think he should) that The *Three Persons* are *One Being, One Substance, One Spirit*, (like as he says they are *One God*) that Edge will be taken off*.

That (I conceive) which did impose upon him in this Point, is the forced sense, which, in our Language, we sometimes put upon the word *Person*, for want of another English Word (answering to *Homo*) which might indifferently respect *Man, Woman, and Child*: and a like forced sense put by the School-men upon the word *Persona*, for want of a Latin word which might equally relate to *Men and Angels*; as signifying an *Intelligent Being*. Whence he was induced to think, that *Three Persons* must needs be *Three Intelligent Beings*. Whereas *Persona*, in its true and ancient sense (before the School-men put this forced sense upon it) did not signify a *Man* simply; but, one under such, and such, and such *Circumstances, or Qualifications*. So that the same *Man* (if capable of being qualified thus, and thus, and thus,) might sustain *three Persons*, and these *three Persons*, be the same *Man*.

Now if (as he says of himself elsewhere in a like case) he have not been taken to be a *Fool*: Yet a wise Man may sometimes, upon second thoughts, see Reason to change his Opinion (as in that case he did) or rectify his Expressions. And if then he consider, how much easier it will be (and less obnoxious to Exceptions) to main-

* Augustin. Epist. 174. *Spiritus est Deus; & Pater Spiritus est, & Filius, & ipse Spiritus Sanctus; nec tamen Tres Spiritus, sed Unus Spiritus; sicut non Tres Dei, sed Unus Deus.*

tain his Hypothesis thus Rectified : He may think I have done him no ill Offices thus to suggest.

Having thus given you my thoughts of this Hypothesis : If you press me further (as between our selves) to tell you, What *Degree of Distinction* (as in our Metaphysics they are wont to be Reckoned up) I take this to be, between the Three Divine Persons : I think we need not much trouble our selves with such niceties. And if I do tell you ; it is only *ex abundanti*, as what doth not much concern the main-question in hand ; (which is safe enough without it :) Nor that I do prescribe therein, as to require others to express their Sentiments just as I do.

The *Degrees of Distinction* commonly mentioned in our *Metaphysics*, are such as these : *Distinctio rationis ratiocinantis*, (which is purely Notional, and depends merely on our Imagination :) *Destinatio rationis ratiocinata* (which is otherwise said to be *secundum inadquatos conceptus ejusdem rei* :) *Distinctio Modalis*, (either *ut res & modus*, or *ut modus & modus*,) which is otherwise said to be *ex parte rei sed non ut res & res* : And *Distinctio realis*, or *ut res & res*. Though, in the Names of these several Degrees, all Writers do not always speak alike. One perhaps by a distinction *ex parte rei*, may mean the same which another means by *Distinctio Realis* : And so of the rest. And these thus marshalled are but a contrivance of our own. They might, for ought I know, have been made more or fewer if the Contriver had so thought fit.

But these Degrees of Distinction, I take to be primarily fitted to our Notions of Created Beings. And are not intended as applicable to God, otherwise than by *Analogy* ; as other Words properly fitted to created Beings are wont to be so applied. And therefore I should choose to say, that (in strictness of speech) our Metaphysics have

have not yet given a Name to these Distinctions : Nor do I know any need of it.

The *Divine Attributes*, we use to say, are distinguished *ratione ratiocinata*, or as *inadequati conceptus ejusdem rei*. And it is well enough so to say, to those that have not a mind to be captious ; but are willing to understand Figurative Words in a Figurative sense. But, to those that have a mind to Cavil, I would speak more cautiously, and say, It is, in God, somewhat Analogous to what we so call in Created Beings. And, That of the *Divine Persons*, somewhat Analogous, in the Deity, to what, in Created Beings, is called *Distinctio Modalis*, or *Distinctio à parte rei, sed non ut res & res*.

If it be asked, What that Distinction is which is thus Analogous : I say, that I cannot tell. You must first tell me (and enable me to comprehend) what is the full and adequate import of the words *Father, Son, Begot, Proceed, &c.* when applied to God, in a sense Analogous to what they signify as to Created Beings. If you cannot tell me, precisely, what they are : How should I tell you, How they Differ ?

But, what need we trouble our selves with these Niceties, or Names of these Degrees of Distinction ? (Which, when we have all done, will by divers Men be diversly expressed.) I think it is enough to say, The Distinction is Greater than that of (what we call) the *Divine Attributes* ; but not so as to make them *Three Gods*. Or, That they be *so Three*, as yet to be but *One God*. And I am content to rest there.

I am, Sir,

Apr. 11.
1691.

Yours to serve you,

J. Wallis.